

Gazette.Net

Maryland Community News

Published: Monday, April 9, 2012

Woman pleads guilty to embezzling more than \$280,000 from ailing mother

by Jeremy Arias

Staff Writer

A Middletown woman agreed to forfeit her inheritance as part of her guilty plea Monday in Montgomery County Circuit Court after she embezzled about \$300,000 from her ailing mother.

Sandra Robyn Shores, 63, of the unit block of Eastern Circle, entered her plea before Judge Mary Beth McCormick on Monday alongside county Assistant Public Defender Michael Gambrill, who outlined the agreement reached between him and Assistant State's Attorney Bryan Roslund.

"My understanding is that ... if my client gives up the right to her inheritance, the state will recommend no jail," Gambrill told the McCormick.

Roslund explained that, because the victim, Joan Shores, Sandra Shores' mother, died in September 2011 at the age of 88 with Sandra Shores as her only surviving heir, the forfeiture of inheritance would take the place of any restitution owed by Sandra Shores.

Joan Shores' house in Rockville is the only item listed as inheritance for Sandra Shores under her mother's inheritance papers.

According to Roslund, Sandra Shores gained power of attorney over her mother, who suffered from dementia, in 2005 to ensure her mother would live comfortably in her home, 4701 Coachway Drive, Rockville. The house in Rockville was fully paid for and Joan Shores received an income of about \$2,275 per month from Social Security and a pension, along with two bank accounts with Bank of America and Capital One, Roslund said.

"By the summer of 2011, all of the victim's cash assets were gone and the defendant had made several attempts to get a reverse mortgage on her mother's Coachway Drive house," Roslund told McCormick.

A state adult protective services investigation was launched into Joan Shores' finances because of the rapid expenditures, ultimately finding that, while Sandra Shores had spent nearly \$100,000 from 2008 to early 2011 for the care of her mother, she also had spent about \$284,430 of her mother's money on herself, including paying rent on her own home, medical bills for her pets, an Alaskan cruise and trips to the Hollywood Casino at Charles Town, W.Va., Roslund said.

"Between December 2006 and June 2010, records show the defendant lost \$47,214 [at the casino]," Roslund said.

In spite of this evidence, Gambrill assured McCormick his client had taken excellent care of her mother.

"Her mother had 'round the clock care from two individuals in her own home [during that time]," Gambrill said.

Gambrill went on to add that, under the power of attorney agreement signed by Sandra and Joan Shores — and overseen by a lawyer — his client was given “broad powers to disperse of and expend” her mother’s assets, including a “gift clause” that allowed her to spend money on herself.

“I’m not saying that she didn’t do anything wrong,” Gambrill said. “But we can get into that at sentencing.”

Shores is scheduled to be sentenced July 12.

jarias@gazette.net

© 2012 Post-Newsweek Media, Inc./Gazette.Net